MILITARY

Operation Rescue runs anti-gay rally

Veterans group denies link to protest

By **Genevieve Anton**/Gazette Telegraph

A protest against gays in the military — promoted locally as a grass-roots effort by veterans — actually is being organized by national anti-abortion and Christian evangelical activists.

The protest, dubbed "Just Say NO to Homosexuals in the Military," is scheduled for today in Colorado Springs in front of the City Administration Building and in dozens of cities across the country. The message is aimed at President-elect Bill Clinton, who has pledged to permit homosexuals to serve in the armed forces.

The notice sent to local media listed the event's sponsors as two area American Legion posts and the Veterans Opposed to Homosexuals in the Military.

However, Bill Williams, commander of American Legion Post 39, said Thursday that "somebody made a mistake," since his organization cannot back a political event and specifically declined to sponsor this protest.

The commander of the other post could not be reached for comment.

As for the anti-gay veterans group mentioned in the release, local organizers admit it isn't a formal organization — just a description of the kind of people they hope will attend the rally.

In reality, the Colorado Springs protest is being staged by two people: June and Phil Harrison. They are associated with Operation Rescue, a group known for blocking abortion clinics with human chains and prayer vigils nationwide. They claim the national leadership of Operation Rescue asked them to contact local veterans groups and not to use the organization's name.

"We don't sound very credible, do we?" June Harrison said in a telephone interview Wednesday.

The sample press release sent to Harrison this week had no letterhead or national contact person. It listed only a fax number in Binghamton, N.Y.

A question sent to that number was answered by a phone call from Harley David Belew, an anti-abortion activist who tried to hand Clinton an aborted fetus this year during the Democratic National Convention.

"We're not trying to hide anything. We just want to keep a low profile," said Belew. He said he was national coordinator for the protest on behalf of the "Resistance," an offshoot of the Christian Defense Coalition, a religious group originally set up for anti-abortion activities.

"Maybe we're coaching people from the side, but nobody steals an unwilling heart," Belew said. "It's up to veterans whether they want to participate."

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against sergeant

Soldier to become Army recruiter

By **Genevieve Anton**
Gazette Telegraph

Fort Carson has decided not to prosecute a sergeant in charge of a military vehicle that overturned last summer, killing the driver. Instead, the sergeant will become an Army recruiter.

The post legal office announced Thursday it was dropping criminal charges of negligent homicide and dereliction of duty against Sgt. David G. Dennis, 32, of Colorado Springs. The decision was made this week by his brigade commander after a military attorney conducted an Article 32 hearing — which is similar to a grand jury proceeding — and recommended the charges be dismissed.

Dennis may receive a letter of reprimand, which could affect his Army career, post officials

It also appeared that he did not get a safety briefing before setting out and was never taught how to protect himself during a rollover.

In a move that military legal experts called "highly unusual," Fort Carson decided to go after his supervisor, Dennis, with criminal charges. Allowing Swiantek to drive without a license or proper training amounted to "unlawfully killing" the victim through negligence, the charges said.

A two-month investigation found that the accident was caused by excessive speed and driver error, officials said. It also determined that Swiantek was learning to drive the armored personnel carrier and knew how to avoid injury in a rollover by dropping down in-

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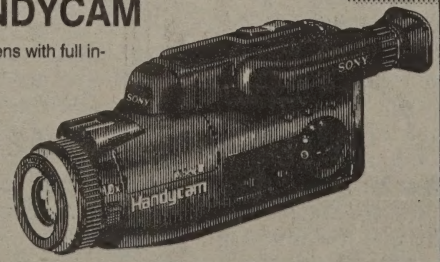

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Military/

From B1

Belew also produces a nationally syndicated radio show featuring Randall Terry, founder of Operation Rescue. Terry has encouraged participation in the "Just Say No" demonstrations on the air and in a Dec. 8 letter that said: "Clinton is promising to further defile our land, further attack the family, to further spurn God's commands" if he lifts the ban.

National gay organizations said they are aware of the protest — and its sponsors — and have alerted their organizations around the country. Some chapters of the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America plan to hold counter-demonstrations.

But others, including the Colorado chapter, say there's no indication a large number of veterans or ordinary citizens are going to show up to "just say no."

"Much to my amazement, this may be a gigantic fizzle," said spokeswoman Miriam Ben Shalon. "We called local veterans groups around the country, and most of them said, 'We're not marching with anybody.' "

Religious and anti-abortion groups are using the issue of gays in the military to "push their own agenda with funding and organizing muscle," said Robert Bray, spokesman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"We realize some citizens and veterans are indeed opposed to gays in the military," he said. "But if they realize this protest is part of a campaign by fanatical Christian evangelicals who are bringing in (abortion) clinic disrupters to run things, they might not want to be associated with that."

But Belew said the majority of people don't care who's involved.

"The bottom line is there are people out there who don't want their family, property and country defended by gays — they don't want a vile agenda forced on the American military.

"We're not here to take credit, but to get this protest organized and moving. What happens with it after this is up to the local leadership."

Tom Kimmell/Gazette Telegraph

June and Phil Harrison, who are organizing a local protest against homosexuals in the military, claim the national leadership of Operation Rescue asked them to contact local veterans groups but not to use the anti-abortion organization's name.

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